Editorial/Comments/Etc.

Citizens need to know how tax dollars are spent

By Liz Mendez

Preparing a city budget is a taxing endeavor, and that's no pun for a city facing a substantial revenue shortfall. To meet our fiscal obligations and continue to provide basic services, something's got to give.

In the past, the city manager's proposed budget has been printed and presented to City Council long before it is given much attention by the public. Last week's council meeting, however, had to be moved to the high school to make room for the large budget-minded crowd.

We're encouraged that people are making their voices heard so early in the budget process. They're telling their elected officials, "City money is tax money, and tax money is our money, and we want value for our dollars." They want to know that every nickel budgeted will be thoroughly evaluated and that their hard-earned cash will be spent efficiently.

When the current budget was written last spring, City Manager Robert Murphy recommended a real estate tax rate increase of five cents. City Council rejected his proposal and sent the budget back to him. Murphy reduced his spending plan by $148,000, including the city's annual $100,000 economic development contribution, leaving the city with what Murphy calls a bare-bones budget.

If past budgets have resembled precarious balancing acts, the 1989-90 document is going to require even more fiscal creativity than ever before. This leads to the difficult question of where cuts should be made.

The city can't abolish its public information officer or personnel director. It doesn't have either. It doesn't have a housing assistance department or a management services branch to do in-house efficiency studies. Poquoson doesn't provide facilities for courts, corrections, health department officials or social services. The York Extension Office has already cut us back to the absolute minimum because we don't adequately fund our share of their services.

"The services that we provide in Poquoson are the pure, basic municipal services," Murphy said at a work session earlier this month. "We haven't added services. All we've tried to do is get a little better at what we do."

Plus, there are unfunded needs in Poquoson, things that keep getting pushed to the bottom of the priority ladder. City Hall, for instance, is a hodgepodge of uses. The police department is tacked onto the back of the building. One fire station serves the whole community.

Garbage is collected only once a week. Drainage is a constant problem. Many of our roads should be elevated. We need an emergency exit from the eastern end of town. Our school sports programs are having financial troubles. Most of the city is without sidewalks. There are few bike trails. We have a good plan for developing the Big Woods but no money to install utilities or buy land for future use.

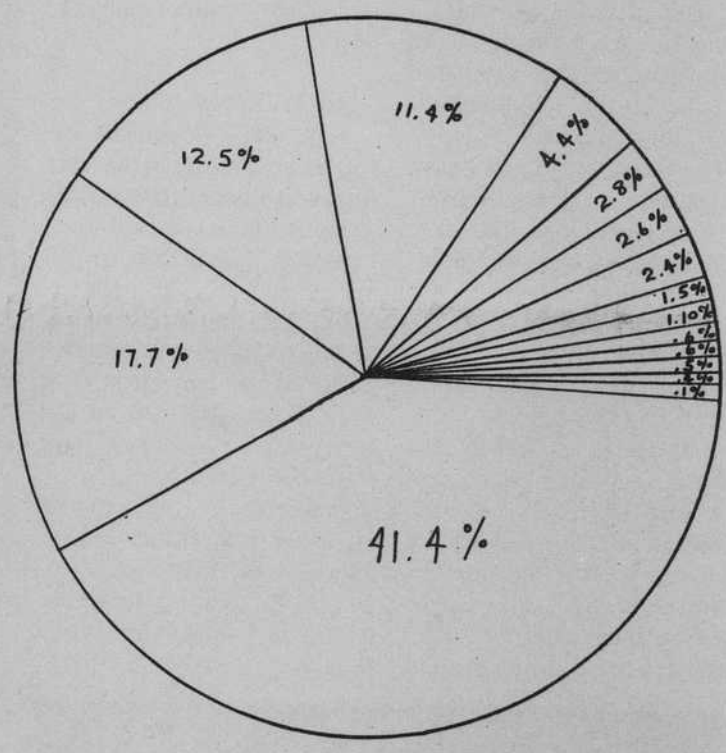
What, then are our options? Before calling for sweeping budget cuts, we thought it would be helpful to see where our tax dollars go. With that in mind, we've prepared a budget pie chart with a twist. We've given you unidentified percentages. See if you can figure out which items account for what percentage of the overall budget.

We have also printed a chart comparing current annual real estate taxes with taxes computed at $1.06, the amount needed to offset an anticipated revenue deficit. Keep in mind that real estate taxes are payable in two increments, June 5 and December 5 of each year.

Take a look at these figures and make your desires known to the City Manager. Write a letter expressing your desires and mail it to Robert Murphy, Poquoson City Manager, 830 Poquoson Ave., Poquoson, Va. 23662.

How a real estate tax increase would affect your pocketbook

Property Assessment	Current Rate $.91/$100	Proposed Rate $1.06/$100
$ 25,000	$ 227.50	$ 265.00
50,000	455.00	530.00
75,000	682.50	795.00
100,000	910.00	1,060.00
125,000	1,137.00	1,325.00
150,000	1,365.00	1,590.00
175,000	1,592.00	1,855.00



If you were to slice your tax dollar into wedges, this is what it would look like. This pie chart illustrates how the current year's $7,026,600 spending plan is sliced and served out to city departments. Can you match the budgeted amount with its corresponding category? The answers are on page 7.

1. Capital Projects _____%
2. Library (includes loan payment) _____%
3. Property/Liability Insurance _____%
4. Police and Fire Protection _____%
5. Recreation Activities _____%
6. Courts/Corrections/Health/Welfare _____%
7. Animal Control _____%
8. Administrative & Legal Services _____%
9. Seafood Festival _____%
10. Public Works _____%
11. Mosquito Control _____%
12. Education _____%
13. Parks Maintenance _____%
14. Cultural/Community Development _____%
15. Other _____%

Elderly can now receive range of health care within Poquoson

By Jan Grigg

Elderly Poquoson residents can now stay in their own community when seeking a health care residence. With the opening of Bayside of Poquoson Convalescent Center, the cycle of available care is complete.

The first facility for the elderly to be established here was Heritage Place. It is for those who cannot maintain their home for various reasons, but do not need heavy medication. Some of the residents have their own cars and come and go as they wish. Meals and some medical help are usually offered at this type of residence.

Intermediate care is the next level and this is the type of care offered at Bayside. There is observation by licensed personnel on a 24-hour basis, and medication is dispensed. Physical therapy is also available, and meals are provided. At this level of care the patients are not allowed to have cars. Many, in fact, may be bedridden. The main focus of this type of care is observation for the prevention of major illnesses, and treatment of chronic conditions.

Skilled care is the next step and there is very little offered on the Peninsula. This type of help is for those who need a registered nurse on a 24-hour basis with extensive treatments and medication. Elderly patients recovering from surgery with a wound that has not healed would come under this type of care.

The final phase is acute care which is found within a hospital setting for those who need round-the-clock nursing and all medical equipment available.

Because Poquoson is a close knit community with a willing to help spirit, the two new facilities feel they are an asset for the elderly from this area. At last residents can stay in their own neighborhood when they need this special care.

Poquoson Island Times

Published weekly by Islander Publications, Inc.
499-B Wythe Creek Road
Poquoson, VA 23662
Phone: 868-7199

Editor.....William H. Sylvia, Jr.
Asst. Editor.....Liz Mendez
Graphic Artist.....Ron Ward
Controller.....Nancy L. Sayre
Advertising.....Joy Rezek & Paula Willcox

The only newspaper published in Poquoson for, by and about Poquoson people